

July 10, 2019



## Three Commissions Joint Statement: Invasive Mussels and the Invasive Mussel Collaborative

The Great Lakes Commission, the International Joint Commission and the Great Lakes Fishery Commission each has legal mandates related to protecting the Great Lakes. The Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA) commits the governments of the U.S. and Canada (the Parties) “to protect, restore, and enhance water quality of the Great Lakes” and “to prevent further pollution and degradation of the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem.” Jurisdiction and responsibility for managing invasive mussels is dispersed across multiple public natural resources agencies within the Great Lakes Basin. To achieve the objectives of the GLWQA and meet the mandates of our agencies, the three Commissions individually and collectively support more coordinated and enhanced actions under the GLWQA to address the pervasive and destructive impact of invasive mussels in the Great Lakes basin.

Trillions of invasive dreissenid mussels cover large portions of the bottoms of the Great Lakes, encrusting fish-spawning reefs and depriving fish and other organisms of necessary food sources that are essential to ecosystem services that support societal and economic activities. These mussels can clog and cause damage to drinking water intakes thereby increasing the already high costs associated with water infrastructure repair and maintenance. It is difficult to exaggerate mussels’ impact on the Great Lakes ecosystem and economy.

The three Commissions recognize and support the Invasive Mussel Collaborative (IMC) as the principal forum in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin for agencies and other stakeholders to cooperatively identify priorities and develop solutions to the long-standing problems created by invasive mussels in the Basin. Notwithstanding existing authorities to address invasive mussels, the three Commissions further recognize the IMC as an appropriate mechanism for fostering dialogue, coordinating activities, and providing scientifically-sound information to guide actions addressing mussel-related impacts. The IMC’s work is integral to fulfilling the GLWQA’s purpose of protecting the physical, chemical, and biological integrity of the largest freshwater system in the world.

The IMC was established in 2015 to share information, identify regional research and management priorities, and advance scientifically sound performance-based technologies for invasive mussel control. Founding members include the Great Lakes Commission, U.S. Geological Survey, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Great Lakes Fishery Commission. The IMC [\*Strategy to Advance Management of Invasive Zebra and Quagga Mussels\*](#), released in 2018, offers a Basin-wide roadmap to advance science and understanding of invasive mussel control.

In support of U.S. and Canadian commitments under the GLWQA Annex 6, the three Commissions request that the IMC present its progress to the Annex 6 Subcommittee on a regular basis and as part of that Subcommittee’s reports to the Great Lakes Executive Committee.

